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Illinois Bike Transportation Plan

Transforming Transportation for Tomorrow

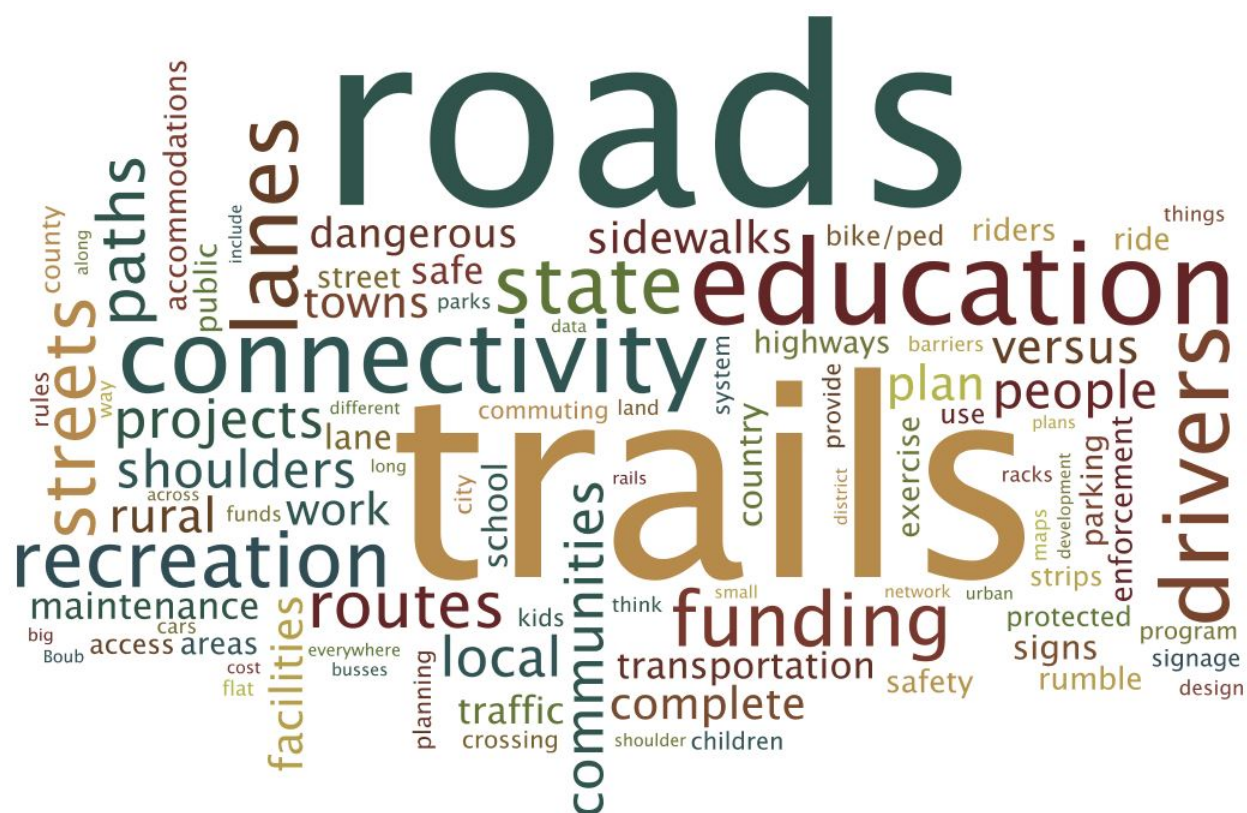
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During the summer and into the fall of 2013, IDOT and the project team engaged in an extensive, multi-faceted outreach effort. To date, more than 3,000 individuals have participated through the outlets described on the following pages. Additional opportunities for input are underway via IDOT's public meetings regarding the 2015-2020 Proposed Multi-Modal Transportation Improvement Program, as well as a soon to be launched on-line survey about missing links within regional bikeway networks.



Alta Planning + Design



Steering Committee and Advisory Committee

This planning effort established two separate committees to guide the Plan's development: a Steering Committee and an Advisory Group. The Steering Committee, composed of IDOT members, representing various departments with a stake in the plan, have guided the planning process and offered valuable input and insight to ensure that the plan is both visionary and pragmatic. The Advisory Group, made up of representatives of metropolitan planning organizations, state and national agencies and State non-profit organizations, have thus far played a significant role in the planning process as well. Members of the advisory group have provided local context and input regarding bike facilities and facility development, helped organize and build support for public meetings in their areas, and disseminated information to local stakeholders and to the general public.

What We Heard

Advisory Group Meeting Input

During the August 2013 meeting, the Advisory Group was asked to rank a list of several broad bicycling-related recommendations for IDOT on a 1-5 scale, with five being the most important and one being the least important. These recommendations were generated from input the team had gathered up to this point in the planning process, such as the IDOT district interviews.

The ten members of the Advisory Group who were present at the meeting, on average, ranked all recommendations on the list greater than three – indicating some importance for every item listed. The five highest-ranked recommendations from the list include (average rank in bold):

4.80 - IDOT should build a statewide database of local bicycle (and potentially pedestrian) plans.

4.67 - Include more complete recognition of bicycle travel needs in early stages of design.

4.67 - A priority (of IDOT) in bicycle facility design should be providing bicycle facilities that are safe and attractive to users of all ages and abilities.

4.60 - IDOT should improve designs and policies to better reflect context (ex. urban vs. rural roadway design).

4.50 - Facility selection guidance should include bicycle accommodations on nearby, alternate routes.

A full list of the recommendations and average rankings is included in **Appendix A**.

Advisory Group Formal Comments and Recommendations

In September 2013, the project team asked the Advisory Group members to provide formal comments and recommendations, representative of their respective agencies. These comments were reviewed and are being considered in the Plan's development. Comments that the team are located in **Appendix A**.



League of Illinois Bicyclists (LIB)

The League of Illinois Bicyclists is the primary statewide bicycle advocacy group committed to improving bicycling conditions in the State. Ed Barsotti, president of LIB, serves as a member of the Illinois Interagency Bikeways Council and the Greenways & Trails Council, along with members of IDOT as well as other organizations.

LIB offered many detailed, technical recommendations on the bike plan, including:

- Road project selection recommendations
- Bikeway warrants
- Improvements to the Bureau of Design and Environment (BDE) Manual Bikeway Selection table
- Secondary or “next highest and best” accommodations
- Resurfacing projects recommendations
- Paved shoulders and rumble strips recommendations
- Local Cost Share recommendations
- Sidewalk construction, and cost share or credit recommendations
- Keeping BDE and Bureau of Local Roads (BLR) manuals current with best design practices
- Intersections and refuge islands recommendations
- Transportation Alternatives Program recommendations
- Highway Safety Plan and 402 Traffic Safety Program recommendations
- Bicycle and pedestrian coordinator recommendations
- Technical training recommendations for design staff and consultants
- State bicycle map recommendations, and
- Performance measures recommendations

Details on these recommendations can be found in **Appendix A**.

In addition, LIB states:

“IDOT and its consultants have done much work comparing IDOT’s policies to those in national standards/guidelines and in other states rated highly as “Bicycle Friendly States.” LIB supports using these standards, and best practices from other states, to develop recommendations in the plan. For example, Wisconsin’s design manual – and its administrative code interpreting its Illinois-like complete streets law – reinforces several of the recommendations... with a high level of practical detail.”

Openlands

Openlands is the oldest and largest land conservation group for the greater Chicago region. The organization offered comments, primarily specific regional bikeway connection recommendations, for the greater Chicago region. In addition, they offered the following noteworthy recommendation concerning future bicycle trail opportunities:



“The era of rail-to-trail opportunities is nearing an end, as most such opportunities in urban areas, and a significant number of such opportunities in rural areas, have utilized the most easily-available corridors. The next generation of potential bicycle/hiking corridors could be focused on the many national and state significant historic trails that traverse Illinois. All of these historic trails either were built upon by the state highway system (eg: the National Road/U.S. 40, or the Galena to Chicago Road/U.S. 20), or these historic trails are crossed by the State Highway system...”

The full set of recommendations from Openlands can be viewed in **Appendix A**.

Forest Preserve District of Will County

The Forest Preserve District of Will County manages forest and conservation lands in Will County. The Forest Preserve offered specific recommendations for bikeways in Will County, supported the League of Illinois Bicyclists recommendations, and offered a general policy recommendation:

“It would be beneficial if all state or federally funded local projects required an analysis of bicycle needs during engineering; and that, at a minimum, provisions for future bicycle accommodations are included in those projects regardless of the current level of funding. In rural areas, a paved 4' shoulder (bicycle accommodation) could also be considered a benefit to the roadway, protecting the edge from damage by farm equipment. Road and bridge repairs should also require an opportunity for early review and consideration of bicycle accommodations. Too often our bridges remain barriers to bicycle travel even after they have been upgraded. “

The full set of recommendations from the Forest Preserve District of Will County can be viewed in **Appendix A**.

Active Transportation Alliance

The Active Transportation Alliance is the Chicago region’s primary active transportation advocacy group, comprised of over 7,000 members across Illinois. Their recommendations for the plan include:

1. Grow a network of “family bikeways”.
2. Reverse IDOT’s policy of blocking protected bike lanes on state routes.
3. Boost the efforts of local governments building bikeways.
4. Make state routes truly Complete Streets.
5. Ensure bike and pedestrian projects get a fair share of federal transportation funds.

The full set of recommendations from the Active Transportation Alliance can be viewed in **Appendix A**.

Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning is the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the greater Chicago region. In their opening statement, the organization states:

“CMAP believes that a strong commitment at the highest levels to significantly increasing the safety, comfort, and convenience of non-motorized travel in our region – and throughout the state – is crucial to achieving the goals of livability, access and mobility, health, and sustainability outlined in both the



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Illinois Long Range Transportation Plan and CMAP's GO TO 2040 plan. We are hopeful that the Illinois Bike Transportation Plan will embody those goals and effectively translate them into specific policies, routine design and maintenance practices, funding provisions, and ultimately, real-life projects and programs aimed squarely at increasing cycling and walking as safe, convenient, and popular modes of travel in Illinois."

CMAP recommends that IDOT focus on improving policies that affect the bicycling environment, establish bicycling performance measures and develop a statewide training program for Department staff as well as local agencies. In addition, CMAP provides several comments on specific recommendations including:

- Project scoping and prioritization
- The Bureau of Design and Environment and the Bureau of Local Roads Manuals
- Local Complete Streets project cost share
- Data Collection, and
- Establishing priority bicycle routes throughout the state.

Details on these recommendations can be found in **Appendix A**.

Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR)

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources is responsible for the management of a large majority of the State's public lands. It is also in charge of distributing the Recreational Trails Program grant monies and running the Greenways and Trails program, which provides greenways and trails planning assistance to counties throughout Illinois.

IDNR states that it "supports a focus on policies, design and treatments for road based cycling. (IDNR) also strongly supports off-road trails and advocates that they should be given priority focus in the State Bicycle Transportation Plan." They also provide some specific comments, including recommendations on state and national trails, development of off-road trails, development of trail networks, improving the state's ability to develop rail-to-trails and improving the State's bicycle-related grant programs. Details on these recommendations can be found in **Appendix A**.

Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission (SSCRPC)

SSCRPC serves as the joint planning body for the City of Springfield and Sangamon County. Along with this on-going responsibility, the Planning Commission staff works with many other public and semi-public agencies throughout the area to promote orderly growth and redevelopment, conducting numerous research studies and planning projects each year. They offered several comments highlighting critical elements in accommodating the near and long term needs of the bicycling community, factors for considering when bikeway projects are selected for funding, current issues with IDOT support of bikeway improvements, the importance of the U.S. Bicycle Route System, appropriate bicycling goals for the Department, and other critical issues to the State Bike Transportation Plan. The main issues cited included:

- A need for an interconnected network of off-road trails



- An interconnected network of bicycling facilities
- Available public funds for bicycling
- Cooperative, continuing, and coordinated planning among all jurisdictions
- Conformance to bicycle plans when selecting bicycle roadway projects
- Transportation Alternatives Program funding
- Continuation of the Illinois Bike Transportation Plan Advisory Group
- Staff dedicated to overseeing the implementation of the Illinois Bike Transportation Plan.

Details on these recommendations can be found in **Appendix A**.

Letter of Collaboration and Support from Illinois Department of Public Health

The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) works to protect Illinois residents against disease and other health problems. The Department extended its intent to support and collaborate with the Illinois State Bicycle Transportation Plan. The Department emphasized their partnership and stake in the Plan's success. Director LaMar Hasbrouck, MD, MPH writes, "Promoting and supporting bicycling in the State is not just a transportation issue but one that also improves health, recreation and quality of life as well as addressing social justice... Transportation policies are public health policies."

Director Hasbrouck details existing IDPH chronic disease prevention and health education programs that correlate with the Plan's intended purpose. For instance, The Safe Built Environment program within the We Choose Health Initiative endeavors to promote safety and active transportation choices for Illinois residents. Details on these recommendations can be found in **Appendix A**.

Illinois Office of Tourism

In a letter dated November 22, 2013, Jen Hoelzle Director, Illinois Office of Tourism thanked IDOT for developing the Illinois Bike Transportation Plan. The letter describes the Office's enthusiasm for the plan and Illinois trails' potential to serve as income generators and as employment for Illinois residents. Director Hoelzle writes that the Office of Tourism looks forward to partnering with IDOT to increase the number of visitors who enjoy Illinois trails. The letter also describes particular interest in the idea of a larger trail network that would link historic trails and increase partnership between communities. The full letter can be found in **Appendix A**.

Illinois Alliance to Prevent Obesity (IAPO)

The Illinois Alliance to Prevent Obesity (IAPO) is a "statewide coalition comprised of stakeholders working for a state-level response to the obesity epidemic". As such, the coalition uses policy improvements and strategic investment to cut the sources of the problem. In IAPO's comments on the State Bike Plan, Executive Director Elissa Bassler writes, "We believe you will agree there is little doubt of the dynamic relationship between the way we build transportation systems and people's health". Executive Director Bassler makes suggestions related to IAPO strategy objectives, including:

- Developing public/private partnerships to develop bike/walking paths along with other recreational equipment for children such as parks. She describes that they should be close to residential areas and to underserved and low-income communities.



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- Develop and implement SRTS programming including assessment of these impacts on mode share and traffic crash rates.
- Use a variety of means including policies, incentives, facility improvements, and worksite locations to encourage biking, walking, and transit.
- Adopt and implement Complete Streets policies at a variety of levels. Use policy to provide access to safe spaces for physical activity and allow employees to incorporate activity into their work environment.

The complete letter from Executive Director Elissa Bassler and the Illinois Alliance to Prevent Obesity is included in **Appendix A**.

Website and Listserv Participation

IDOT used multiple online platforms to expand the Plan's reach. The project website functioned as the information hub, providing visitors with:

- background information
- updates on the planning process
- a calendar of events and activities
- links to important documents
- materials from the public meetings
- an online survey



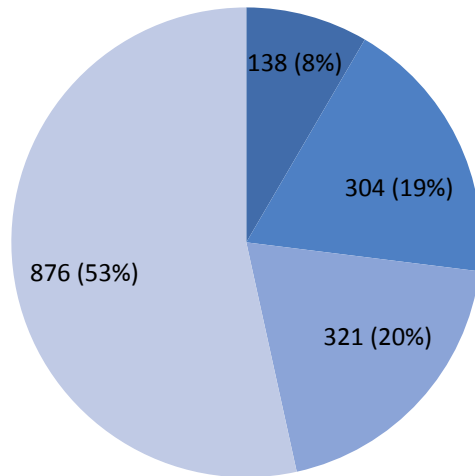
An email distribution list, or listserv, established by the Department at the onset to the Bike Plan process, provided periodic updates and announcements throughout the Plan's course. Over 3,500 individuals were subscribers. The team also used the listserv to solicit input on identifying focus areas for the Plan, below.

What We Heard

A short, four-question survey was distributed via the listserv in late March, 2013. As of September 2013, IDOT has received 1,563 responses. The survey asked respondents to select important issues they felt the Illinois Bicycle Transportation Plan should address. Of the nine possible responses, participants cited Connectivity, Safety, and Bikeway Design as the three most important issues. The remaining three questions collected demographic, occupational, and transportation-related information to gain a better understanding of current and future users of the statewide bikeway network. More than fifty percent of respondents bike occasionally or regularly for transportation and recreation, while less than ten percent indicated they seldom use a bicycle at all. The following graphs show the results from this survey.

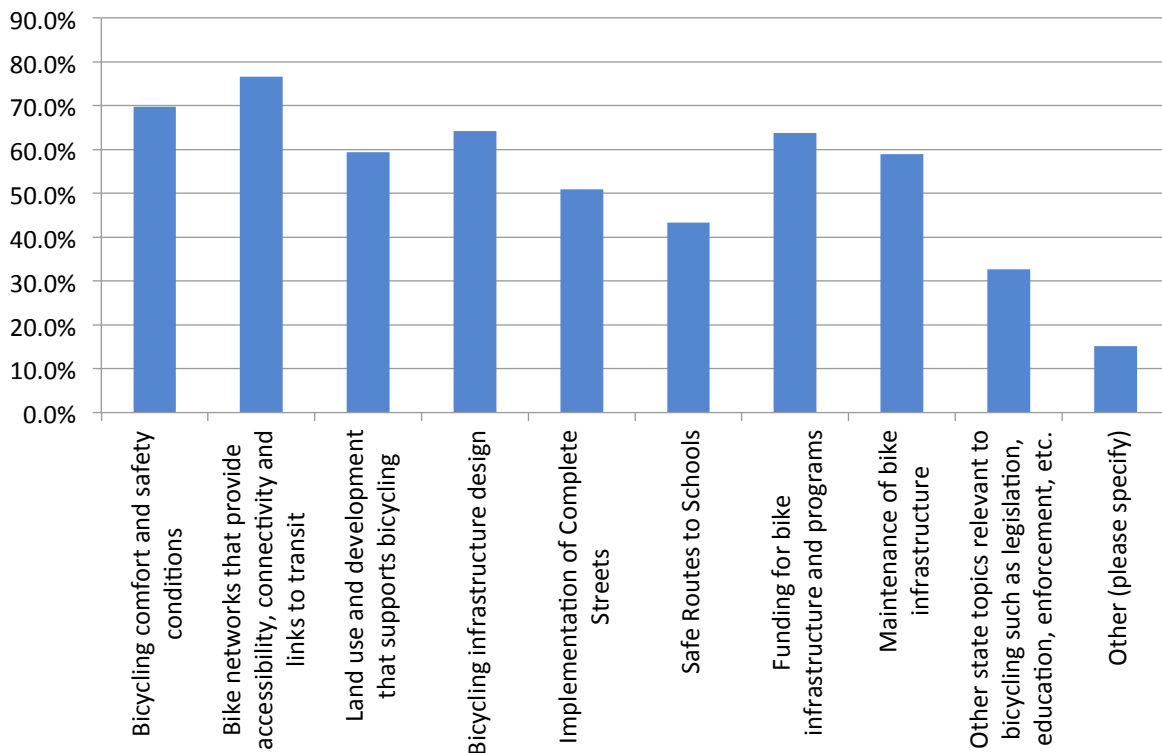


Which of the Following Best Describes Your Bicycling Habits?



- I don't or seldom bicycle for transportation or recreation
- I occasionally or regularly bike for transportation (at least once a week)
- I occasionally or regularly bike for recreation (at least once a month)
- I occasionally or regularly bike for transportation and recreation

What are the most important issues that you feel the Plan should address? (select all that apply)





FHWA and IDOT Interviews

Phone interviews with FHWA Safety Specialist Greg Piland and IDOT representatives closely associated with bicycling, from the central office and all nine IDOT districts, were conducted in May through September of 2013. Central office representatives included Michael Brand, Acting Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator and Policy & Procedures Engineer, and Priscilla Tobias, State Safety Engineer and Bureau of Safety Engineering Chief. The purpose of these interviews was to help gauge what the central office and districts are doing well in terms of accommodating bicyclists, to understand what the prevalent issues are with accommodating bicyclists in the State's transportation system, and to see if the districts have ideas for improving Complete Streets implementation. The discussions were organized in the form of a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis – the sample questions, interview notes, and summary of interviews are located in **Appendix B**.

What We Heard

District Interviews

The District representatives identified many issues and opportunities for better Complete Streets implementation across several categories including Design, Policy, Public Involvement/Relations, Education, and Communication. Below presents a brief summary of these topics, which are further detailed in **Appendix B**.

Design

Design practices for bicycles were an issue that came up frequently. The major points raised across all districts were:

- Design guidance should clearly specify the difference between urban and rural contexts.
- Policies and design guidelines in Chapter 17 (Design & Environment Manual) should be clean, clear, and in-line with the rest of the BDE Manual.
- Viable alternatives to sidepaths, such as on-street facilities, should be offered in policy and guidance.
- Better guidance is needed on the design of sidepaths at driveways.
- Guidance should be improved on providing alternate routes in a project's development.
- Design guidance should address lane width for inclusion of bike facilities. For example, when are 11' and 10' lanes acceptable, so that bicycle facilities can be incorporated?
- Clear guidance is needed on whether the districts should include shelves for multi-use paths or sidewalks in all roadway projects, regardless of whether these facilities get funded and built.

Policy

Major policy issues that came up in several different interviews included:



- There is a desire for clarification or better methods of measuring warrants. For example, the current method of latent demand forecasting for bicycles is not effective.
- There is a desire for clarification on urban versus rural areas.
- The project selection matrix should account for nearby alternate routes.
- Funding is usually the restriction for acceptance by communities, especially if there isn't local support or they don't understand the reasoning for a project. This is an issue that should be addressed.
- The resolution that communities have to sign if they opt out of Complete Streets improvements is holding up some projects; communities can't afford or don't want to pay for improvements, but they also don't want to sign a resolution against bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
- The 2'-3' shoulder policy in HSIP and 3R projects conflicts with the Complete Streets policy.
- Guidance is needed on where road diets are warranted and what the appropriate designs for them are.
- The project selection matrix and funding policies give preference to bicycle paths and shoulders over bike lanes.
- More guidance is needed for addressing logical termini for bike accommodations in safety improvements and spot improvements.

Public Involvement/Relations

Many districts mentioned that, especially in rural areas, public buy-in is often a barrier to obtaining the local funding match and suggested this could be partly solved through greater public outreach. Public involvement/relations topics and suggestions included:

- Additional public outreach would be beneficial.
- A database of local plans would be helpful for public relations.
- Local plans would be more helpful to IDOT efforts if they included prioritization, facility types, and funding.
- In some areas there is a negative public perception with trails.
- IDOT could require representation on local Bike/Ped advisory committees (such as in District 5) to keep abreast of what's happening locally.
- Communities should be aware that a bike plan helps with ITEP applications.
- Some communities are afraid of the liability of adding bicycle accommodations (Boub v. Wayne)
 - They should know that a bike lane is just a special travel lane.
 - They don't like the idea of children along busy roads.

Education

Some districts offered creative solutions for education and training and indicated that more training is needed, while others indicated that current training on Complete Streets issues is sufficient. Education topics and suggestions included:



- Video tutorials and webinars would be helpful.
- Training needs to be available to all staff, including consultants, construction, and maintenance staff.
- An internal inter-departmental forum and resource-sharing site would be helpful.
- Some districts are not familiar with tools such as BLOS, the Bicycle Compatibility Index, etc.
- More frequent training is needed.
- The success of bicycle transportation depends on public and Departmental education.

Communication

Several districts mentioned that greater communication and resources at the Central Office would be helpful to their efforts. Specific issues that were mentioned included:

- Having readily available resources and personnel at the Central Office is key.
- The Central Office should give clear direction on addressing multi-modal considerations. The old mentality was that locals are required to take care of bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.
- Chapter 17 should discuss innovative practices, but maybe not recommend them until they are proven.
- Some districts are not familiar with who makes design decisions.
- It would be good to have bike accommodations on bridges tracked in ISIS. It would also be good to have sidewalk information in IRIS. Right now, districts have to keep their own updates.
- There should be a full-time bicycle and pedestrian coordinator in the Central Office.

Interview with Greg Piland – Safety Specialist, FHWA Illinois

Mr. Piland was able to highlight many things IDOT is currently doing well in terms of implementing Complete Streets, and what steps should be taken in moving forward to improve implementation. One of the biggest challenges Mr. Piland noted is that IDOT has not yet filled the bicycle and pedestrian coordinator position left vacant when Todd Hill retired (May 2012). He added that even if this position is filled, just one bicycle and pedestrian coordinator will be difficult to cover the needs of the entire state. He noted that important steps moving forward with Complete Streets in Illinois include:

- Developing a system of regional bike routes.
- There is not a good bicycling/Complete Streets education process in Illinois. The first step is getting the MPOs to push bicycling to all areas within their region. The next is reaching out to communities outside of the MPOs and Colleges
- Bicycle and pedestrian considerations are bigger hurdles in rural areas.
- Bicycle action plans should be attributed to districts to ensure implementation.
- The most important things to increase bicycling include: Education, Action Plans, Linkages, and Funding.



- There needs to be more bikeways planning at all levels to garner support for connecting remote linkages.

Detailed notes from the interview are included in **Appendix B**.

Interview with Michael Brand - Acting Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator and Policy and Procedures Engineer

Mr. Brand identified several areas in which the State has advanced in accommodating bicycles and implementing Complete Streets since he has been with the department. An example of a recent project that incorporated bicycle facilities through creative design measures is Dirksen Parkway in Springfield, where 12' lanes were narrowed to 11' to fit in a 4' bike lane. The gutter pans were also paved over to provide additional space for bicyclists along the roadway edge.

Mr. Brand identified the following major issues to be looked at with this Bike Plan effort:

- Some of our accommodations only meet the minimum requirements. With a clearer vision, we can do better. Also, due to most projects being scoped for vehicular roadway improvements, the bike accommodations provided often leave gaps.
- The local bicycle and pedestrian funding match is an issue that seems to come up all too often.
- The right balance between strict design guidance and design flexibility needs to the goal of Chapter 17 of the BDE Manual. Strict guidance gives designers confidence and aids in consistency; however, bicycle accommodations often work best when they are tailored to the context of the project.

In addition, Mr. Brand made several specific comments and recommendations on Complete Streets policy. These are included in **Appendix B**.

Interview with Priscilla Tobias - State Safety Engineer and Bureau of Safety Engineering Chief

Mrs. Tobias offered insight on how the State Highway Safety Improvement Program affects bicycling. She noted that the Department and the Bureau are actively trying to make advancements in improving bicycle and pedestrian considerations, that there is more emphasis on Complete Streets than there used to be throughout the Department, and that Departmental and community support for Complete Streets is growing. Some of the major needs of the Department and Bureau include:

- Better data to target and support Complete Streets improvements. For example, a big missing piece in data is exposure; we have limited counts for bicyclists and pedestrians.
- A means for determining where demand, or potential demand, is high.
- Public education is needed on safe and comfortable routes locally and regionally for walking or biking.
- Education is needed for drivers on their responsibility to yield to other roadway users.



- Better education and possibly enforcement is needed for bicyclists on the use of lights and rules of the road.
- The Department should be working with the Secretary of State and communities on public education.
- The Department needs to address funding mechanisms for Complete Streets.
- The Department needs to define what routes and facility types are appropriate for what types of bicyclists, whether they are experienced, intermediate or novice riders.
- The Department should recognize that all types of bikeways won't fit all users.

Mrs. Tobias also stressed that it is especially important for the Plan to address bicyclist fatalities and injuries. Additional comments made by Mrs. Tobias and an overview of the current efforts to better identify areas where safety improvements are most needed are included in **Appendix B**.

Interview with Priscilla Tobias Program - State Safety Engineer and Bureau of Safety Engineering Chief - regarding Illinois Safe Routes to School (SRTS)

Mrs. Tobias offered insight regarding the Illinois Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program's history, current operation, and future program planning. Mrs. Tobias discussed differences between this funding cycle and the previous cycles under SAFETEA-LU. During the most current round of funding, the total number of applications for the Illinois SRTS Program exceeded the available resource supply. As such, the program depends on innovative and high-quality use of funds from invested and conscientious applicants. The discussion included a number of ideas regarding program strengths, challenges, and opportunities for growth. The following list details the major topics raised during the discussion.

- IDOT is working on posting a sample program application online. This document will model strong application elements and will help reduce application weaknesses seen in earlier funding cycles. The website updates will also include videos and other materials to offer assistance to applicants.
- Cost estimation was one weak area of previous applications that IDOT received.
- IDOT plans to move towards more state-wide, standardized versions of videos, brochures, and other resources.
- Mrs. Tobias and staff from Alta Planning + Design discussed how to encourage schools and other applicants to name SRTS coordinators amongst themselves. This could be a requirement for future call for proposals.
- Applicants need to address peer pressure and teasing among children involved in the program. For instance, administrators, staff, and parents need to address issues of children who are teased for wearing helmets.
- IDOT is interested in new ideas and ways to consolidate existing material such as brochures, curriculum guides, and toolkits.

The information received during this interview assisted in formulating Chapter 8 in Section II-- the Plan's Illinois SRTS review.



MetroQuest Survey

Throughout the months of July, August and September, nearly 2,800 people completed the MetroQuest survey to share their input on bicycling in Illinois. Roughly 86% of respondents (2,401 individuals) completed the survey on-line, while 14% (397 individuals) completed the survey in-person at one of the public or transportation professionals meetings held throughout the State. Survey results helped identify future bikeway system improvements, preferred facility types, significant user groups, locations of bicycling activity, and other important information. The section below summarizes the findings and a detailed analysis of the results is provided in **Appendix C**.

What We Heard

Based on the self-identification questions included in the survey, two trends emerge. First, survey respondents reflect the diversity of the State's population distribution. From rural to urban, people in all types of communities provided input. Second, the overwhelming majority of survey respondents already bicycle on a regular basis, regardless of the presence or condition of the local bicycle network. While nearly all respondents ride for exercise or recreation, more than half bike for the convenience of bicycling as a mode of transportation, to save money, and for environmental reasons.

IDOT plays a significant role in shaping the bicycling environment in Illinois through system improvements, funding, design, and policies. When asked their priorities, respondents put System, Design, and Policy Improvements at the top of the list, reflecting their desire for a larger, safer, and more connected network of bicycle facilities. Respondents also identified Traffic Safety as the greatest barrier to bicycling, and Route Safety as the most important factor when planning a bike trip. Of the possible facility types and improvements that could be made to enhance the bicycling environment, survey respondents prefer Greater Separation through protected bike lanes, buffered bike lanes, cycle tracks, and off-road trails.

While the survey may not have captured as many responses from the “interested but concerned” group of bicyclists, who represent a key target audience for their potential to become more regular cyclists, the survey results indicate that even more experienced cyclists are concerned about Safety and Connectivity, and desire more Separation from motor vehicle traffic.

Outreach Meetings

In July and August, a series of outreach meetings were conducted throughout the State to inform the public about the Plan and gather feedback. The meeting locations were selected to reach a diverse audience, representative of the State's population distribution and demographic composition. In each of the nine locations, two meetings were conducted: an afternoon meeting to engage transportation professionals, and an evening meeting to engage the general public. The project team coordinated with local IDOT districts, metropolitan planning organizations, local agencies, and advocacy organizations to publicize the meetings and encourage area residents to



attend. An additional virtual meeting (webinar) was held on-line to reach out to those unable to attend any of the local meetings. More than seven hundred people attended the meetings, sharing their unique experiences, needs and desires to make cycling an integral part of the local and State transportation networks.

Table 1 displays the locations, dates, and number of participants for public and professional meetings, respectively.

Table 1: Public Meetings

Meeting	Date	Number of Attendees: Public	Number of Attendees: Professional
Chicago	07/09/2013	62	63
DeKalb	07/15/2013	51	29
Peoria	07/16/2013	29	52
Springfield	07/17/2013	26	16
Champaign-Urbana	07/18/2013	20	24
St. Louis/Metro East	07/22/2013	26	37
Quad Cities	07/23/2013	14	18
Rockford	07/25/2013	33	12
Carbondale	08/01/2013	47	33
Online Public Meeting	07/30/2013	124	
Total		432	284

The number and diversity of attendees and represented organizations suggests a broad interest in the Plan and its potential to impact communities throughout the state. Over 60 local agencies, 50 non-profits and/or bike clubs, and 11 educational institutions participated.

General Structure

The meetings were designed to provide attendees a basic understanding of the Plan's background and components while also offering multiple opportunities for discussion and input. Each meeting began with a guided conversation about experiences and observations of bicycling and bicycling-related conditions in the region. The meeting then transitioned to a formal presentation and slide show covering the Plan's background, scope and timeframe; national and state trends; and IDOT's



role in supporting bicycling as a safe, viable mode of transportation. The project team guided attendees through the on-line survey (distributed in print to attendees) before concluding the meeting with an additional discussion and final comments. Attendees of the transportation professionals meetings were asked to fill out an additional survey to help the project team gain insight from those who are more familiar with the technical aspects of bikeways implementation and may be involved with implementation of the Plan.

What We Heard

The project team compiled poster notes from each meeting's group discussions, as well as any written comments submitted by participants. Although this input is more qualitative than the surveys, it reveals major themes and concerns related to cycling in Illinois. There was significant overlap among all the meetings in terms of topics discussed; the differences were mostly how often certain issues were raised. For example, the general public meetings tended to focus more on the built environment, with each district reflecting priorities most suited to its context. Policy, funding, and barriers to implementation were more frequently mentioned at the transportation professional meetings. See **Appendix D** for notes taken by team members during whole group discussions at each meeting.¹

The following questions were the main springboards for discussions:

- **Who do you see riding? Where are they riding and why?** This question served as an icebreaker and warm up for discussion. Building awareness of the myriad roles cycling can and does play in Illinois helped establish a framework for discussing improvements.
- **What are some of the best and worst things about cycling in Illinois?** Sharing positives revealed exemplary projects that can serve as reference points in the future, as well as assets that can help promote cycling in general. It also cultivated an atmosphere of forward momentum, showing that Illinois is not starting from scratch. However, there is much room for improvement, as evidenced by the often passionate comments about the worst aspects of cycling.
- **What changes would you like to see?** This question was part of the icebreaker, and revisited later in the meeting. Participants were encouraged to think broadly. Their comments generally fell into the following categories:
 - Infrastructure and Connectivity
 - Education, Encouragement, and Enforcement
 - Planning and Policy

Who is riding? Where and why?

Participants throughout the state collectively indicated that people from all walks of life use bicycles everywhere for a variety of reasons. However, there was also recognition that cycling is still a niche activity, and that context and culture greatly influence its rate of usage. For example, riding for

¹ The team has also transcribed written comments from the informal surveys and is preparing a brief summary of each district's meetings, including any local recommendations that might contribute to the upcoming survey on regional networks.



recreation was noted more frequently in rural meetings, while riding for transportation was a greater focus during urban ones. Despite these differences, both categories of trip purpose were generally considered relevant and important, and not mutually exclusive.

Frequently mentioned trip purposes included:

- Fun/pleasure
- Commuting to work or school
- Fitness/exercise
- Running errands
- Visiting friends and family
- Accessing recreational destinations, such as trails, parks, restaurants, and sporting venues
- Socializing, such as family outings, club rides, and training groups
- Connecting to transit
- Travel and tourism

Discussions about who is seen riding were less robust; the reasons above can generally apply to people of all ages, abilities, and communities. However, some specific user groups were mentioned:

- Children, alone and with adults: They are generally considered more vulnerable, while at the same time in need of independent travel options. It can also be intimidating for adults to ride with children—whether as passengers or on separate bikes—without some kind of protection from fast moving vehicular traffic. Most people indicated that the majority of children cycling are seen on trails, with families. However, it would be desirable for them to have safe means of walking and bicycling independently to school and other activities.
- College/university students: In areas with a large student population, these groups were often mentioned as making up a great deal of the bicycling population and would be able to benefit greatly from the presence of better bicycle facilities.
- Recreational Riders: Depending on the meeting location, many people indicated a significant presence of recreational riders, often in groups, along rural roadways. Some locations often mentioned a significant number of touring “through” cyclists.
- People without routine access to cars: Whether by choice, income, or household logistics, some rely on bicycles as their primary form of transportation, or as a component of multi-modal travel. They can be seen riding year round, to a variety of destinations, at all hours of the day. It was often mentioned that members of this group especially appear to lack education about the rules of the road.
- People unable to drive: This was often related to having a license revoked because of a DUI or traffic violation, not being able to get a license because of legal status, or having a disability that creates a barrier to driving.



Illinois Bike Transportation Plan

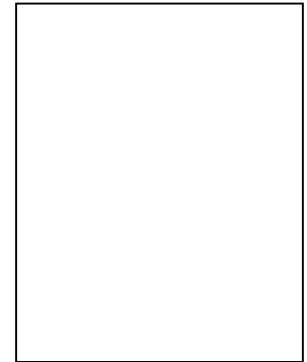
Transforming Transportation for Tomorrow

Best Things about Bicycling in Illinois

Participants were asked to identify Illinois' bicycling-related strengths and areas of progress. The breadth of comments shows that participants believe Illinois has many inherent strengths for accommodating bicyclists.

- Generally flat, scenic terrain, with hills in the south providing variety.
- Suitable weather most or all of the year (depending on locale and comfort levels).
- Compact communities with grid systems.
- Towns in close proximity.
- Low traffic, rural roads, many of which are hard surfaced.
- Increased number and connectedness of trails.
- Increased number of bike lanes.
- New projects with “Complete Streets” components, such as recent bridge projects over the Illinois River in District 3.
- Increased availability of bike parking.
- Connections to and accommodations on transit, including Amtrak.
- Chicago's bike sharing program.
- IDOT embracing adding bike underpasses and overpasses, or along existing structures.
- Growing bicycle planning efforts complete or underway.
- Growing collaboration among different agencies and municipalities.
- Strong advocacy groups.
- Public health involvement, such as hospitals providing helmet fitting services.
- Use of Transportation Enhancement funds.
- Private partnerships.
- Potential for promoting bike touring.
- A growing number of bicyclists.
- Cultural shifts that embrace cycling.
- Educational efforts.

On wide open
country roads:
“It is like having
bike paths
everywhere!”
Springfield public
meeting





Illinois Bike Transportation Plan

Transforming Transportation for Tomorrow

The little things
are big things.

Section I- Existing Conditions
--Champaign Public Outreach
Meeting

Worst Things about Bicycling in Illinois—and What to do About Them

Conversations and written contributions about problems, solutions, and opportunities were often intertwined during the outreach meetings. This section pulls those threads together, and presents them by issue.

Infrastructure and Connectivity

Especially in the public meetings, a major focus was on the need for safe, comfortable, and continuous routes, whether for short trips to the store, or long rides through the State.

Design: There was strong support for making roads within and between communities safer and more comfortable for bicycling, especially busy arterials that provide the only access to key destinations, such as schools, commercial centers, and recreational areas. The ability to travel to other communities—and states—can be compromised when major roads are the only options for through travel. Bridges were noted as particularly important, not just because they provide access over barriers, but because the opportunities for improving them are infrequent.

Referring to Complete Streets principles, participants called for designated room for cycling on roadways, with varying degrees of separation from vehicular traffic depending on context. On rural cross-section roads, there was strong support for paved shoulders without rumble strips (or, if needed, ones that use a bicycle friendly design). In urban areas, especially Chicago, protected bike lanes and/or road diets were called for to make major arterials safer and more comfortable for cycling. There was also support for sidepaths as a way to provide physical separation, but intersection design and cost were noted as challenges. It should also be noted that while support for designated on-road bicycle facilities was greatest, there were also some attendees who prefer to use a vehicular cycling approach where riders are fully integrated into traffic.

Although there was great enthusiasm for trails, especially for recreation, most of the design discussions were related to roads. This might be a reflection of the plan's focus on transportation, and IDOT's primary span of influence. Some participants noted that they don't use trails for commuting or training to avoid conflicts with people walking, jogging, or riding more slowly. Limited access points on trails can also pose a challenge for people using bikes for transportation. In some areas where trail access is restricted during certain hours, participants requested they be open at all times. Intersections and traffic speed were also cited as barriers to both bicycling along roadways and when trails cross roads.

Maintenance: Maintenance also came up as an area of concern. Trail challenges include overgrown vegetation and poor surface conditions. Potholes and debris create problems on roadways. It is not always clear which jurisdiction is responsible for maintaining various sections of trails and roads.





Connectivity: There was recognition that increased miles of trails and on-road bikeways have provided more options for cycling. However, missing connections on busy roads—even for short distances—can undermine their usefulness, especially for more vulnerable riders. In addition to filling gaps, wayfinding was discussed as a strategy for directing people to the best available routes. End of trip needs were also discussed, primarily bike parking.

Education and Enforcement

Across the State, there were strong calls for better education relating to using the road. Dangerous driver behavior—whether through distraction, hostility, or ignorance of law—was noted as a serious problem. People on bikes who do not follow the rules of the road were also a concern. Requests included:

- Add more content related to bicycling in driver’s education and driver’s license test.
- Add an on-bike component to driver’s education and driver’s license test.
- More bicycling-related instruction for elementary school children.
- If driver’s education is required in High School, bicycling education should be as well.
- Greater enforcement of traffic violations for all roadway users.
- Education of public officials, transportation professionals, and residents at large about the benefits of cycling and reasons to accommodate it.

Policy and Planning

An underlying theme was that bicycle (and pedestrian) accommodations should not be considered add-ons, but rather integral parts of Illinois’ transportation networks. To help realize the goals of Illinois’ Complete Street policies, participants talked about:

- Design flexibility and context sensitivity.
- Streamlined project development process.
- Using routine maintenance projects as opportunities to improve cycling conditions.
- Full funding of bicycle components as part of state projects.
- Increased coordination between agencies.
- More consideration of latent and future demand.

Transportation Professional Surveys

Local engineers, planners, advocates, and other professionals have first-hand knowledge and experience with the implementation and programming of bicycle facilities in the Illinois. The insight they shared at these meetings has helped to determine how this Plan can be crafted to better meet their needs and address some of the issues and challenges they face in making Illinois a better place to bike. At each of the nine transportation professionals meetings held in July and August of 2013, participants completed a brief survey to share their needs and experiences as they relate to the development of bicycle infrastructure as a part of their daily work. The survey gauged transportation professionals’ familiarity with current IDOT and national design resources, perceptions of current



policies and procedures, and desired assistance to support the development of bicycle facilities in their region. The complete survey results and a detailed summary are included in **Appendix E**.

The results of this survey reveal some of the challenges that professionals face on a daily basis, as well as their visions for bicycling as a form of transportation in Illinois. Survey findings show that, while many resources exist for the planning, design and construction of bicycle facilities, these resources may not be known and widely referenced by professionals throughout the state. Many of the planners, designers, engineers and other professionals that completed the survey acknowledged their limited familiarity with these resources and expressed their desire for access to more guidance and information that can help them be successful in making bicycling a viable transportation choice.

For example, when asked to rate their need for additional design guidance for different bicycle facility types, participants expressed a strong desire for additional guidance for separated facilities, both on-road and off. The high ratings for additional guidance on protected and buffered bike lanes reflects transportation professionals' need for resources to develop innovative facilities, as well as the growing interest in and demand for these bikeway types, particularly in larger urban areas. Bicycle-friendly shoulders, and trails are common throughout the State, and their high ratings indicate that, despite their prevalence, local transportation professionals still have a need for additional guidance.

Many transportation professionals expressed their support for the State's commitment to Complete Streets. However, they were concerned that this commitment is not supported by the funding, design resources, and engagement efforts with local communities that are necessary for it to be successful. IDOT policies pertaining to Complete Streets and non-motorized transportation are traveling faster than the resources that support them, and many local transportation professionals feel this disconnect creates additional hardships in meeting these policy goals.

Additional Input and Outreach

The team gathered additional input and conducted additional outreach as needed throughout the development of the plan. This included targeted interviews with key stakeholders outside of IDOT, meetings with local stakeholder groups such as the Network of Chicagoland Bike Planners at Higher Education Institutions, and Trails Linking Communities in Bartlett, IL, and fielding questions and comments via email from the Plan's website. The results of these activities are discussed below:

Tabling

In addition to the formal outreach meetings, the project team conducted several tabling events throughout the state at events where bicycling stakeholders were likely to be present. These events included Bike the Drive in Chicago (May 2013), The Illinois Bicycle Summit (May 2013), Tour De Fat in Chicago (July 2013), the Illinois State Fairs in Springfield and Du Quoin (August 2013), and the 2013 UIC Sustainability Days Cycling Extravaganza & Transportation Fair (September 2013). The purpose of



these events was primarily to spread awareness about the Plan and engage participants, but some informal input was gathered during the process as well.

The setup and participation at these events varied widely. For example, in the case of Tour De Fat in Chicago, the team set up posters giving basic information about the plan, had a large board to let people record their vision for bicycling in Illinois and what they would like to see out of the plan, and handouts were distributed giving information about the online public input tool. The State fairs presented similar information, but did not collect input and feedback from the public. The Plan's presence at the Illinois Bike Summit included presentations by IDOT staff members Bola Delano (Deputy Director of Office of Planning and Programming), Gabe Sulkes (Plan Project Manager, Office of Planning and Programming), and Andre Ashmore (Deputy Transportation Secretary), as well as a table providing additional information on the Plan, such as outreach dates. The presence at Bike the Drive was simply a poster giving people basic information on the Plan.

Depending on the location, participants had a varying degree of understanding of IDOT's role in bike transportation in Illinois. For example, at Tour De Fat in Chicago, many participants cited specific, local roadway improvements that they felt should be addressed to improve bicycling – many of these being under the jurisdiction of the municipality. However, participants and advocates at the Illinois Bike Summit had more general, statewide policy and infrastructure questions and comments, possibly indicating a greater understanding of IDOT's role in bicycling statewide.

The team did not record how many people were engaged in this process, but it is likely that this number is well over 200, based on the attendance at the Illinois Bike Summit and observations gathered from other events.

Open Response Website Comments and Listserv Photo Contest

A unique email address for the Bike Transportation Plan was set up through the plan's website, where people could email with questions about the plan or open-ended comments. Many comments on specific roadways were received and are being considered in the development of the Plan's analysis and recommendations. For example, one individual pointed out several bicycle and pedestrian concerns with the new Route 30 path design between New Lenox and Harlem Avenue in Frankfort, such as roadway crossings, maintenance, and connectivity.

In addition, a photo contest was initiated via the Plan's email listserv to collect photos of bicycling and engage stakeholders. Approximately twenty photos were collected, several of which have been incorporated into the final plan document.

Interview with John Greenfield – Editor for StreetsBlog Chicago

In August 2013, the project team interviewed John Greenfield; Editor for StreetsBlog, a national, web-based multi-modal transportation advocacy publication (www.streetsblog.org), and Chicago area multi-modal transportation advocate; to gather his input on current deficiencies and recommended solutions in regards to bicycling in Illinois.



John stated that one of the biggest limitations to bicycling for transportation in Illinois are barriers to multi-modal connections such as Metra and Amtrak. He believed that looking at these connections when planning bicycle networks were important at the local and regional levels. In addition, accommodation of bicyclists at train stops, in the form of secure bike parking, and on trains, in the form of a designated and dependent space for bicycle storage, is important.

In addition to this, he believes that the IDOT district bicycle maps in more urban areas (District 1), don't represent bicycling conditions well, and suggested that the methodology needs refinement in those urban areas. This same comment had also been heard by the team in other venues.

Finally, one of John's major issues was the design and maintenance of streets with adjacent sidepaths. He believes that more thought needs to be put into the design of sidepaths at intersections, and although a sidepath is present, some people may still choose to bike in the street, so design accommodations should be made to support these users as well. He also stated that protected bike lanes are preferred in urban areas due to rights-of-way constraints. Finally, maintenance of sidepaths is a concern as they are often not maintained as well as roadways.

Appendix F has the full list of concerns and recommendations from the interview with John.

Value and Limitations of the Process

The input process was very extensive and has added a great deal of value to the Plan, helping guide and support the development of many Plan recommendations. The participation numbers and geographic representation show thorough coverage of all areas of the State, which helps give this study credibility.

While it was successful in many ways, the process did have some limitations that have been considered in the development of the final plan:

- Outreach often drew a large amount of input from supporters and advocates of bicycling, as indicated in the public outreach meetings and MetroQuest surveys, but didn't necessarily provide a representation of the general public. Although, several of the information outlets, such as IDOT's 'IDOT in Motion,' and IDOT's Facebook pages, are widely broadcast to all transportation user groups. The attendance numbers do indicate that there is strong support for bicycling in Illinois.
- The amount of informal input, largely in the form of emails and conversations, was very large and often difficult to record and analyze.
- The outreach meetings were centered near population centers, possibly under-representing stakeholders that live in towns further away.
- Much of the information broadcast and received was in a digital, online format, possibly excluding less technology savvy stakeholders or those without access to the internet.